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STATE ALSO PASS TO USAID
STATE FOR TSUNAMI TASK FORCE 1
USAID/W FOR A/AID ANDREW NATSIOS, JBRAUSE
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA
DCHA/OFDA KISAACS, GGOTTLIEB, MMARX, RTHAYER,
BDEEMER
DCHA/FFP FOR LAUREN LANDIS
DCHA DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR WILLIAM
GARVELINK
ANE DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR MARK WARD
BANGKOK FOR OFDA SENIOR REGIONAL ADVISOR TOM
DOLAN
KATHMANDU FOR OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR WILLIAM
BERGER
GENEVA FOR USAID KYLOH
ROME PASS FODAG
NSC FOR JMELINE
CDR USPACOM FOR J3/J4/POLAD
USEU PASS USEC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: (SBU) SRI LANKA - EARTHQUAKE AND
TSUNAMIS: USAID/DART SITREP #17

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Summary

1. (U) At a February 21 meeting, the Commissioner General of Essential Services instructed the Government Agents (GA) and lead shelter agencies to establish a district project office that will coordinate transitional shelter issues in each affected district. In addition, the Commissioner stated that decision-making and approval of transitional shelter, including land allocation and shelter requirements, would be decentralized and made at the district level. On January 27, the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) announced assistance packages for owners of tsunami- damaged houses. Families with houses within the Coastal Conservation Zone (CCZ), or buffer zone, will be provided new houses free of charge and in close proximity to the original location of their damaged houses. Affected families with houses outside the CCZ will be entitled to a state grant depending on the extent of the damage. The Ministry of Agriculture's Water Resources Board has offered its assistance to the Ministry of Urban Development and Water Supply (MUDWS) to locate new groundwater sources and to investigate the quality of existing water sources. End summary.

Shelter

2. (U) On February 21, the Commissioner General of Essential Services Tilak Ranaviraja, head of Task Force for Relief (TAFOR), chaired a meeting on transitional shelter. GAs and representatives from tsunami-affected districts, except Ampara, attended the meeting to discuss the Transitional Accommodation Project (TAP). Meeting attendees also included representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), U.N. agencies, and donors, such as the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART.)

3. (U) During a presentation of the current situation on housing, Nimal Aberatne, Coordinator of TAP, stated that tents are a problem because they are too hot, not water-proof, and not secure enough for families' possessions. As a result, no additional tents would be released unless in emergency situations. The GOSL is committed to providing housing in two stages: transitional shelter for up to 18 months and permanent housing. Mr. Aberatne emphasized that under the current GOSL policy for transitional housing: a) guidelines for house design and minimum specifications have been established; b) a range for the cost of each housing unit has been stipulated by donors; c) the CCZ, or buffer zone, has been established; and d) the GOSL will provide land

for new housing for those with houses within the CCZ.

14. (U) At the meeting, the Commissioner General instructed the GAs and the districts' lead shelter agencies to establish a project office that will coordinate the TAP in each affected district. The lead shelter agency in each district - either an NGO or a U.N. agency - will be responsible for setting up the office and providing at least 2,000 square feet of office space and adequate parking. The office will be staffed by full-time personnel including: a) a project officer appointed by the lead agency; b) a land officer, preferably a retired government official with experience in land issues; c) a technical officer with field experience and nominated by the GA; d) representatives from key relief agencies in the shelter sector working in the district; and e) a police officer if the agencies feel one is needed. In addition, the lead agency should provide transportation facilities, whether a car, motorcycle, or tri-wheeler, for government officials posted to the office to visit sites throughout the district. Mr. Ranaviraja also noted that the GAs and lead agencies should determine whether additional project offices are needed in those divisions that might be far from the district's center. The Commissioner requested that the offices begin operations on February 25 and stated that he will travel to all the districts between February 25 and 28 to officially open the project offices.

15. (SBU) According to the Commissioner, decision-making and approval of transitional shelter, including land allocation and shelter requirements, would be decentralized and made at the district level because the central government does not know the particularities of each site. However, Mr. Ranaviraja noted that decisions should adhere to established central government's parameters; and the national project office would intervene or provide guidance when needed. [Comment: The USAID/DART noted that the manner in which the Commissioner conducted the meeting and announced the decentralization of decision-making contradicts the decentralization message. End comment.]

16. (U) In response to the Commissioner's request for suggestions on what to do with the large number of tents in the country not yet distributed, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative proposed that the GAs identify those internally displaced persons (IDPs) that are still living under plastic sheeting. The surplus of tents could then be used to replace the plastic sheeting and give these IDPs better living conditions before receiving temporary shelters. UNHCR requested that GAs complete a questionnaire handed out at the meeting to determine exact shelter needs at the district and division levels.

17. (SBU) Comment: The USAID/DART noted that the GAs were not given much time during the meeting to share information and raise concerns about the situation in their districts. The meeting consisted of top-down instructions from the Commissioner General. End comment.

18. (U) On February 27, the GOSL announced assistance packages for owners of tsunami-damaged houses. Damaged houses within the CCZ will not be allowed to be reconstructed. According to the announcement, the GOSL will provide these families a new house with a minimum area of 500 square feet free of charge and in close proximity to the original location of their damaged houses. The proposed houses will be located in urban and rural settlements that will be provided with infrastructure, such as electricity, water and sanitation, and recreation facilities. Affected families with houses outside the CCZ will be entitled to a state grant depending on the extent of the damage. Families whose houses have a repair cost of more than 40 percent of the house's value will receive 250,000 rupees disbursed in four stages. Houses with a repair cost of less than 40 percent are entitled to 100,000 rupees disbursed in two stages.

19. (SBU) The GOSL's announcement also indicated

that no development activity in the western and southern districts will be allowed 100 meters from the mean high water line, while the CCZ in the eastern and northern districts is 200 meters. The GOSL has decided that the only exceptions to the CCZ policy will be: a) coastal conservation structures and vegetation; b) activities in connection with the fisheries industry, such as harbors, piers, anchorages, warehouses, and ancillary facilities; c) agricultural activities approved by the Coast Conservation Department; d) historical monuments and archeological sites; and e) essential infrastructure facilities. [Comment: The GOSL's decision to establish the CCZ is controversial and will certainly cause protests from people in affected areas that will be forced to move as a result of this regulation. End comment.]

Food

10. (U) At the February 21 shelter meeting, the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) presented the preliminary results of the food needs assessments mission. The needs assessment mission consisted of 1) review of secondary data pre-tsunami food insecurity from 2003; 2) a nutrition survey conducted in collaboration with the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF); and 3) a joint WFP and International Labor Organization (ILO) livelihood survey covering 1,860 households. Preliminary results highlight the need to scale down general food assistance after three months and refine targeting of beneficiaries. WFP presented a proposal comprised of four programs: a) meet short-term needs in tsunami-affected districts during two to three months; b) provide employment opportunities through a combination of cash- and food-for-work schemes; c) provide nutritious food to vulnerable groups through the Ministry of Health (MOH) and through take-home rations; and d) provide a safety net to households with high dependency ratios who are unable to sustain themselves.

Water and Sanitation

11. (U) On February 22, representatives of the USAID/DART and USAID/Sri Lanka attended a meeting hosted by the MUDWS, with the audience primarily from the donor community. MUDWS reported that the following five water and sanitation gaps remain: a) expedite the procurement of equipment and materials urgently needed, such as gully emptiers; b) investigate new water sources closer to residents; c) identify additional staff to operate water trucks, gully emptiers, and purification plants; d) establish a water quality surveillance system; and e) provide the balance requirement of toilets for transitional housing. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture's Water Resources Board attending the meeting offered the organization's assistance in locating new groundwater sources and investigating the quality of existing water sources. [Comment: The USAID/DART noted that this was an important development in initiating coordination between two GOSL agencies. End comment.]

12. (U) The MUDWS' National Water Supply and Drainage Board completed a water and sanitation needs assessment for each tsunami-affected district. Preliminary results from the assessment indicate that needs total approximately USD 197 million, including piped water service to new settlement areas, repairs to existing piped water systems, and the temporary delivery of water by trucks.

13. (U) The U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) noted that responsibility for monitoring water quality needs to be clarified. The WHO representative suggested that GOSL ministries and boards responsible for water issues work in coordination with the MOH to develop monitoring procedures for water quality monitoring. At this time, MUDWS has laboratories at the district level, but the MOH's public health inspectors send testing samples to the MOH

regional laboratories. WHO recommended increased coordination between both ministries to streamline the monitoring process.

14. (U) According to the USAID/DART Water and Sanitation Officer, the hygiene promotion workgroup, comprised of the MOH and a small group of NGOs and U.N. agencies, has not produced any promotional materials to date. The workgroup was given the task of finding available and appropriate hygiene promotion materials that could be used immediately in the transitional camps and having posters ready by the end of January. However, the group developed a plan for a hygiene promotion campaign that includes various forms of media and would take too long to implement, thus not addressing the immediate concerns of the water and sanitation coordination group. UNICEF is trying to get the workgroup to focus on a short-term plan to find existing educational materials.

15. (U) At the February 25 Water and Sanitation meeting, UNICEF presented results from a February survey conducted in 319 IDP camps in the nine tsunami-affected districts. The average size of each IDP camp was 87 families. Results from the survey indicate that while potable water is available at all camps, quantity varies widely. UNICEF recommends that an additional 1,200 water storage tanks be setup in camps throughout affected districts.

NGO Coordination

16. (U) At the February 25 NGO coordination meeting, the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) announced plans to present a list of recommendations to the Commissioner of Essential Services for improvements on relief effort coordination. CHA requested that NGOs provide suggestions for the list. Relief agencies continue to express frustration about the lack of leadership and coordination for the relief effort.

17. (U) CHA encouraged relief organizations to contact the Ministry of Finance and Planning. In early February, the Ministry issued a communiqu   requesting organizations involved in tsunami relief and reconstruction activities to

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provide the following information: a) details of ongoing programs and estimated costs; b) details of proposed projects and programs, including estimated costs; c) source of funding; d) annual report; and e) audited accounts and financial statements. The communiqu   stated that this information is being requested to quote ensure the effective use of resources for
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reconstruction, transparency and accountability in allocation and disbursement of funds, and effective overall coordination so that the funds raised are effectively matched with the needs of the affected areas end quote.

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